



## Request for Applications



RFA # 003-ITCCDF-2022

**TITLE:** Specialized Birth- 3 Technical Assistance Program

**FUNDING AGENCY:** NC DHHS/Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE)

**ISSUE DATE:** February 14, 2022

**RECEIPT DEADLINE:** Applications, subject to the following conditions, must be received no later than **5:00 pm, March 25, 2022.**

**EMAIL an electronic PDF of your application to the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education via this email:** [DCDEE.Contracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.Contracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov).

The signature of an authorized official is required on the application face sheet. An electronic signature or an electronic scanned copy of the signed application face sheet will be accepted. **Only electronic application submissions via email will be accepted, i.e., do not mail, fax, or deliver copies of the application to DCDEE's physical or mailing address.**

**INTENT TO APPLY:** Eligible agencies and/or organizations interested in applying for this RFA are encouraged to notify DCDEE of their intent to apply via the following link, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2GLBRWG> no later than **5:00 pm, February 23, 2022.** Agencies are **not** required to notify of their intent to respond to this RFA; this information is requested to assist DCDEE in planning.

**BIDDER'S CONFERENCE:** DCDEE plans on hosting a Bidder's Conference for this RFA on **February 15, 2022 at 2:30 pm.** During this time an overview of the RFA will be presented along with an opportunity for Q&A. Click the link below to join the session:  
<https://ncgov.webex.com/ncgov/onstage/g.php?MTID=e62fbdbd666b87c57dd9a7b756c28c729>

**DIRECT ALL INQUIRIES** concerning this Request for Applications in writing to:  
Theresa Roedersheimer, Infant Toddler Policy Consultant  
Email address: [DCDEE.Contracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.Contracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Questions concerning the specifications, or any information contained within this Request for Applications (RFA) must be received no later than **5:00 pm, February 23, 2022.** All questions must be received in writing, via electronic mail to: [DCDEE.Contracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.Contracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov). Responses to all questions received by the deadline will be posted on the Division of Child Development and Early Education website <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Whats-New> no later than **5:00 pm, February 25, 2022.**

**ELIGIBILITY:** This RFA is open to state agencies and universities, public and private nonprofit organizations with a current 501(c)(3) standing with knowledge of early childhood education (ECE) systems, effective policies, and practices at all levels of the ECE infrastructure, a demonstrated ability to develop and execute equity focused projects, and program design and evaluation expertise. Also experience in compensation/incentive planning and design as well as human resource solutions.

**FUNDING AVAILABILITY:** This RFA will be for a 3-year funding cycle for the following State Fiscal Years: 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025. Approximately \$2,500,000 will be available to support each funding year. One award will be funded through this announcement.

DCDEE will determine the actual funding amount based on the proposed execution of the project and the utilization of funds as outlined in the successful applicant's proposal, pending funding availability.

**Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Funding Source:**

1. Funding Type	Discretionary
2. Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN)	2101NCCCDF
3. Federal Award Date (see § 200.39 Federal award date)	02/03/2021
4. Total Amount of the Federal Award (awarded to DCDEE)	\$133,621,971.00
5. Federal award project description, as required to be responsive to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)	Child Care Development Fund - To make grants to States and Tribes to assist low-income families with child care and to: (1) Allow each State maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within State; (2) promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions on the child care that best suits their family's needs; (3) encourage States to provide consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care; (4) assist States to provide child care to parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance; and (5) assist States in implementing the health, safety, licensing, and registration standards established in State regulations
6. Name of Federal awarding agency, pass-through entity, and contact information for awarding official	Federal DHHS Office Administration for Children and Families Christopher Felton Grants Management Officer <a href="mailto:Christopher.felton@acf.hhs.gov">Christopher.felton@acf.hhs.gov</a> 617-565-2443 NC DHHS/DCDEE

	333 Six Forks Road Raleigh, NC 27609
7. CFDA Number and Name; the pass-through entity must identify the dollar amount made available under each Federal award and the CFDA number at the time of disbursement	CFDA# 93.575 Child Care and Development Block Grant
8. Identification of whether the award is R&D	No

**Federal Requirements on indirect cost rates and calculations according to 2 C.F.R. 200.414:**

1. If your agency has or establishes a Federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (FNIR), then the agency is not allowed to charge the “de minimis” rate of 10% (or some other amount) for indirect costs, as directed by 2 C.F.R. 200.414(f).
2. Agencies with an FNIR are required to charge their agreed upon rate for their indirect costs and include cost items as determined by the FNIR in their indirect costs.
3. Negotiation of indirect cost rates in excess of the “de minimis” rate of 10% are performed by the NC DHHS Office of the Controller, Cost Analysis and Administration section if funds are awarded to your agency:

Cost Analysis/Federal Financial Reporting/Administration  
DHHS Office of the Controller  
NC Department of Health and Human Services  
1050 Umstead Dr  
Raleigh, NC 27699-2019  
Phone: 919-855-3696

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

A child's early years can have lifelong physical, cognitive, social and emotional impacts. While positive experiences and environments can set a young child on a stronger developmental trajectory, traumatic experiences or environments during those formative years can have long-lasting, detrimental impact. Early childhood experiences from birth to age 8 affect the development of the brain's architecture, which provides the foundation for all future learning, behaviors, and health. A strong foundation helps children develop skills needed to become well-functioning adults.

Infants and toddlers thrive when they develop relationships and secure attachments with their families and child care providers. Relationships with children formed outside of the home are created in safe, predictable, culturally developmentally age-appropriate nurturing environments. High-quality child-care environments empower young children to develop the skills towards being emotionally secure, socially competent, and intellectually capable in inclusive settings.

To support our youngest children's development, child care facilities need to move beyond the minimum standards and focus on components that can help children thrive to their fullest. Progress toward an equitable, efficient, and effective early childhood system requires preparation, tailored workplace supports, and adequate teacher compensation concurrently. Adequate preparation is necessary for teachers to develop the skills to provide high-quality learning experiences for children, while workplace supports are needed to ensure ongoing reflection, development, and educator well-being.

The purpose of this requests for applications is to establish a statewide birth through age three coaching and mentoring services whose primary focus will be to increase the availability of high-quality infant and toddler care for families across North Carolina through the provision of individualized coaching, mentoring, and specialized consultation for the child care workforce. The function of this system is to coordinate the work of technical assistance practitioners that specialize in infant and toddler development and culturally inclusive best practices for children birth to three years of age. These practitioners will support the infant and toddler child care workforce for betterment of children and their families.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

There is an abundance of national attention focused on school readiness and programs geared for four and five-year-old children. Child care is a core early learning and care program which plays an important role within a broad spectrum of early childhood programs supporting young children. Research shows children begin gathering these tools long before they enter a prekindergarten program. The facilitation of learning provided to children in their infant and toddler years sets the foundation upon which all future learning is built upon. Ensuring every child has positive culturally inclusive experiences daily is the fundamental goal of the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE).

High quality programs provide the foundational platforms for young children to enter kindergarten equipped with the necessary tools for successful entry into the academic world. Examples of high-quality programs are those that follow comprehensive early learning standards and curricula, utilize appropriate child assessments, and employ a consistent well-prepared and diverse workforce. Research has shown that when children enroll in high quality early education programs early in life, there is the potential to improve developmental outcomes and close learning and opportunity gaps that typically form by the time a child reaches three years of age.

Providing high quality care for infants and toddlers is a challenge for early care and education programs due to a lack of intensive coaching, mentoring, training and support for child care providers needed to meet children's culturally diverse unique needs. Current and ongoing research on brain development indicates a relationship between culturally responsive caregiving and positive social, emotional, learning, and developmental outcomes for children. DCDEE is the Lead Agency for North Carolina's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), "which is the primary Federal funding source devoted to providing low-income families who are working or participating in education or training activities with help paying for child care and improving the quality of child care for all children (81 FR 67438). Reauthorization of the federal grant requires states to spend at least 3% of CCDF awards on activities to improve the quality of child care for infants and toddlers specifically (Pub. L. 113-186).

In February 2019, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) published its Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP). This plan established NCDHHS' vision that all North Carolina children will get a healthy start and develop to their full potential in safe and nurturing families, schools, and communities. The ECAP centers on three themes: North Carolina's young children are healthy, will grow up safe and nurtured, and are well-supported to be learning and ready to succeed. It presents a bold vision, focusing on improving outcomes related to children's health, safety and well-being, and developmental and academic readiness. Part of making this work a reality is ensuring that there is a diverse qualified and supported workforce.

In December of 2018, DCDEE was awarded funding through the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five (PDG) for activities to strengthen its early childhood systems. North Carolina proposed activities that support the state's effort to continuously improve early care and education system to ensure equitable access to high-quality programs for all children and families.

The previously mentioned work that has recently taken place in North Carolina, along with national research, has guided the creation of the programs listed in this RFA.

### **III. SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The successful applicant will propose a detailed plan, including a timeline and budget, to establish and manage a statewide system for providing individualized coaching, mentoring, and specialized consultation for the child care workforce that serves children birth to age 3 enrolled in licensed

family child care homes, child care centers, and religious-sponsored child care programs, regardless of star rating.

This detailed plan must address the following system components:

1. Providing services in all 100 counties of North Carolina.
2. Differentiating service delivery to meet the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse child care programs and their workforce.
3. Engaging child care providers of historically marginalized communities.

### **Establish and manage provisions for Infant and Toddler Coaches**

Develop a plan to establish and manage regional provisions for individualized coaching for the infant and toddler workforce that will provide the supports described below statewide. The plan must include the service delivery model, theory of change, and logic model. Applicants must also provide a timeline if a project planning period is needed prior to program implementation.

Infant and Toddler Coaches will work independently in local communities. A high level of communication, coordination, and support is needed to ensure that the network functions effectively throughout the state. Coach qualifications shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Minimum of a bachelor's degree (master's preferred) in early childhood education or related field and experience working children birth to age 3.
2. Knowledge of all aspects of development in the first 3 years of life.
3. Effective communication techniques working with adults.

Procedures for consistent service delivery and delivery to program fidelity will need to be created and evaluated on an ongoing basis. The successful applicant will describe how the service delivery procedures will embed [culturally and linguistically responsive coaching practices](#).

The plan shall also include a core message to demonstrate how the Infant and Toddler Coaches are unique with unique benefits, communicating its critical role in both complimenting and enhancing other services available in the community. Lastly, the successful applicant would also address the incorporation of principles of effective messaging, including cultural and linguistic responsiveness, into all materials.

Infant and Toddler Coaches shall provide three levels of intervention designed to strengthen the capacity of child care programs to deliver culturally inclusive high-quality services:

- **Level 1:** Individualized Coaching – provide onsite/virtual individualized practice-based coaching services to program teachers working directly with infant and toddler children. The coaching cycle should last for roughly 6 months. More time may be needed to develop a collaborative coaching partnership. These provisions shall align with the practiced-based coaching principles and practices described by the [Head](#)

[Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center](#). The coaching topics shall be built upon NAEYC's [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#). Tools used shall help move teachers to a higher standard of culturally inclusive care. Suggested tools include but are not limited to the following: [Classroom Assessment Scoring System](#), [NAEYC Early Learning Program Accreditation Standards](#), [Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition](#), developmental monitoring<sup>1</sup> and screening tools such as the [Ages & Stages Questionnaires](#) and the [Milestones](#) resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as approved curriculums.

**Coaching Participant Minimum Target: 500 classrooms per year**

- **Level 2:** Teacher Mentorship – provide mentoring services to the infant and toddler child care workforce. Provisions shall include pairing new or less experienced infant and toddler teachers with experienced teachers virtually (peer mentoring), leading a statewide learning & collaborating groups for the infant and toddler workforce, self-coaching opportunities<sup>2</sup>, and providing guidance to teachers as they complete the New Infant Toddler Teacher Orientation (NITTO) training on DCDEE'S [Moodle](#) site. The approved applicant will also be responsible to ensure the information and resources provided in the NITTO training is current and research based.

**Mentoring Participant Minimum Target: 200 teachers/stakeholders per year**

- **Level 3:** Workforce Professional Growth – provide mentoring to the infant and toddler child care workforce on enhancing their professional growth and ethical practices. This work includes education and career advancement through the creation of professional development plans, providing professional development opportunities on infant and toddler topics such as culturally responsive caregiving practices, connecting the workforce to professional early childhood organizations and advocacy groups, and providing scholarships for membership and maintaining a virtual inventory of early childhood research and other print or electronic resources. These provisions shall align with the [Unifying Framework](#) and recommendations on the [Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators](#), educator roles and responsibilities, aligned preparation and pathways, profession compensation, and a supportive infrastructure with shared accountability established under NAEYC's Power to Profession work.

**Workforce Professional Growth Minimum Target: 1,000 unduplicated participants per year**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/screening.html>

<sup>2</sup> Choosing a Coaching Format and Delivery Method <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/pbc-choosing-coaching-format.pdf>

## **Outreach Activities**

The successful applicant will devise a plan to conduct outreach activities to inform stakeholders of the specialized infant and toddler technical assistance program.

1. Coordinate with programs that support the child care workforce such as local Smart Start agencies, Child Care Resource and Referral, universities, community colleges and advocacy organizations.
2. Establish a web-based presence for the program.
3. Incorporate the use of translators to support participants with limited English proficiency, including print materials.

## **Performance Monitoring/Evaluation System**

Develop a plan to establish performance monitoring at multiple levels of operations, from programmatic to participant levels, and regularly reported, evaluated, and used performance information for continuous quality enhancement.

1. Establish a logic model with clear linkages to performance measures that guides the program's resources, activities, and intended outcomes
2. Describe the diversity of population that will be served
3. Establish a basic manual for service delivery that includes standard operating procedures to ensure consistent delivery across a wide geographic area
4. Develop measures and a plan for fidelity of program delivery
5. Define data and data collection methods with clear linkages to performance standard outcomes
6. Determine a system of monitoring the program's performance to gauge the effectiveness in meeting program outcomes
7. Identify standardized and culturally sensitive/equity-informed assessment tools in the program's performance monitoring that are appropriate and relevant to the target area(s) to be measured
  - a. Tools you plan to utilize to assess teacher and child outcomes
8. Identify a process for using data to identify program's strengths and needs
  - a. Develop and implement plans that address program's needs, and continually evaluate compliance with program performance standards and progress towards achieving program goals described in paragraph

## **Expected Outcomes**

Early Childhood Systems Level Outcomes

1. Increased infant-toddler classroom quality across the state.
2. Reduced primary caregiver changes for families and children (minimize the occurrence of teacher turnover).

### Workforce Level Outcomes

1. Increased teacher knowledge about brain development, infant and toddler language and literacy, issues around cultural competence, and meet the needs of diverse learners and their families.
2. Improved teacher-child relationships.
3. Improved teacher-family relationships.

### Child Level Outcomes

1. Increased emotional and social development. (Intervention received by participating teachers has positive effects on the children's learning and development.)

This outcome involves relating to adults, relating to other children, and for older children, following rules related to groups or interacting with others. Children who achieve this outcome show a variety of behaviors related to making and maintaining positive social relationships in culturally inclusive age-appropriate ways. For example, they:

- a) Demonstrate attachment with the significant caregivers in their lives.
- b) Initiate and maintain social interactions.
- c) Behave in a way that allows them to participate in a variety of settings and situations, for example, on the playground, during routines and play.
- d) Demonstrate trust in others.
- e) Build and maintain relationships with children and adults.
- f) Regulate their emotions.
- g) Understand and follow rules.
- h) Solve social problems.

Utilize a valid and reliable, research-based observational or direct culturally developmental age inclusive assessment tool to measure the growth of children because of the coaching being provided to the teacher. Areas of measurement should be based on the coaching content areas which may include language and literacy development, cognitive development, emotional and social development, and physical development. Assessments must be "age, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and appropriate for children with disabilities."

### Timeline

Project Planning	August 1, 2022- December 31, 2022 (optional)
Project Implementation	January 1, 2023- July 31, 2025
Evaluation/Reports	Conduct quarterly programmatic update meeting with DCDEE staff Complete quarterly reports to be submitted to the contract administrator January 30, 2023, 2024, and 2025 Conduct an Annual Program Evaluation by July 31, 2023 and 2024

Final Report	Summarize Overall effect of the intervention to include an analysis of the expected program outcomes due July 31, 2025
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#### IV. **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Reports** – Provide data as requested by DCDEE to meet federal reporting requirements. This includes submitting monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting by the deadlines provided by DCDEE in order to meet any submission date required from the federal funder.
2. **Annual Reporting** – Assess barriers of program implementation and participation. Create an annual action plan to address barriers and increase outreach efforts.
3. **Feedback** – Providing feedback at least monthly to DCDEE is required throughout the duration of the grant to contribute to continuous quality improvement and monitor ongoing processes and the progress towards the goals and objectives of the project.

#### V. **APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS AND CAPACITY**

Applicants must have successfully managed state/community initiatives and have demonstrated substantial expertise in evidence-based practices in providing professional development and technical assistance. Applicants must also exhibit comprehensive knowledge of ECE systems, and expertise in developmentally and culturally appropriate practices for young children ages birth to 3 years. Extensive knowledge and expertise in providing intensive coaching and consultation to the child care workforce is also required.

Applicants must demonstrate their capacity to manage Federal/State grant funds and programs at an intensive level in collaboration with multiple partners through satisfactory audit reports; education, experience, and expertise of key personnel; and demonstrated support for the proposal from the applicant's organization.

Lastly, applicants must demonstrate and provide examples of their capacity to provide services to diverse populations, collaborate with vested stakeholders, and work effectively with various state and local agencies.

Preference will be given to applicants that have demonstrated ability to develop and execute equity focused projects and have incorporated a racial equity lens into their practices.

#### VI. **LINE-ITEM BUDGET & NARRATIVE**

The applicant will submit three line-item budgets: one for the work the applicant anticipates completing during the period of August 1, 2022-July 31, 2023, one for August 1, 2023-July 31, 2024, and one for August 1, 2024-July 31, 2025. The budgets must address the cost to complete deliverables outlined in this RFA. A narrative justification must be included for every expense

listed in the budgets. Each justification should show how the amount on the line-item budget was calculated, and it should be clear how the expense relates to the project's activities. The total for each budget may not exceed \$2,500,000 per year.

### Travel Reimbursement Rates

Mileage reimbursement rates must be based on rates determined by the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM). Because mileage rates fluctuate with the price of fuel, the OSBM will release the "Change in IRS Mileage Rate" memorandum to be found on OSBM's website when there is a change in this rate.

For other travel related expenses, please refer to the current rates for travel and lodging reimbursement presented in the chart below. However, please be advised that reimbursement rates periodically change. DCDEE will only reimburse for rates authorized in OSBM's North Carolina Budget Manual or adopted by means of an OSBM Budget Memo. These documents are located here: <https://www.osbm.nc.gov/budget/budget-manual#Sect51>.

### Current Rates for Travel and Lodging

Meals	In State	Out of State
Breakfast	\$9.00	\$9.00
Lunch	\$11.80	\$11.80
Dinner	\$20.50	\$23.30
<b>Lodging</b> ( <i>Maximum rate per person, excludes taxes and fees</i> )	\$78.90	\$93.20
<b>Total Travel Allowance Per Day</b>	<b>\$120.20</b>	<b>\$137.30</b>
Mileage	\$0.585 cents per mile	

## VII. APPLICATION CONTENT & FORMAT

The submitted electronic application must be formatted to print on 8.5 x 11-inch paper with margins of 1 inch, except for the spreadsheets used in the budget template. Line spacing should be single-spaced. Use Calibri or Times New Roman font **only** no smaller than an 11-point font. All proposals must include the following (*\* indicates form included in RFA posting*).

1. **Application Checklist**\*: Summarizes the application components to be submitted.
2. **Application Face Sheet**\*: Requires electronic or scanned signature of authorized authority.
3. **Proposal Summary**: Provides a brief (3-5 paragraphs) description of the activities the applicant proposes to implement.

4. **Introduction to the Applicant Organization/Applicant Qualifications:** Provides a 1-3-page introduction to the applicant's organization, including:
  - a. The organization's mission, history, and goals
  - b. Qualifications, experience, and expertise of key personnel to be assigned to this initiative including up to three work samples
  - c. The organization's experience in the content area specified in the application
5. **Proposal Design, Timeline & Strategies:** Provide a 5-7-page narrative describing the proposed project design and the activities/tasks as described in Section III that will be accomplished with the available resources. Include as part of the scope of services the major tasks, deliverables, and anticipated dates of completion. Identify the key personnel responsible for each task by position.
6. **Collaborative Partners or Subcontractors:** Provide a 1-3-page narrative describing any collaborative partners or subcontractors the applicant plans to work with as a part of the project. Include partner or subcontractor name, address, and nonprofit or for-profit status. Explain the contributions each partner or subcontractor will make toward this project including resources. Attach copies of support letters from collaborative partners or subcontractors, if applicable. Requested attachments will not count toward the applicant's page limitations.
7. **Line-Item Budget\*, Detailed Budget Narrative, and FTE Sheet\*:** Complete and submit three proposed line-item budgets according to the format provided with this RFA. The budgets shall reflect the funding needed for the periods of August 1, 2022-July 31, 2023, August 1, 2023-July 31, 2024, and August 1, 2024-July 31, 2025, and not to exceed \$2,500,000 per year. Also complete a proposed budget narrative that explains in detail all line items in the budget worksheet in accordance with the "DCDEE Line-Item Budget & Narrative Instructions." The FTE worksheet is also required as part of this RFA. Please complete the FTE sheet first so that the line-item budget will populate Salary/Fringe values in Column C.

## **VIII. SELECTION PROCESS**

The following is a general description of the process for selecting applications for funding for this initiative. A selection committee chosen by DCDEE will review each application submitted. Upon review of each application, the selection committee will assign a numerical rating based on the following:

1. **Proposal Summary** (Maximum of **10** points):  
Response must reflect the applicant's understanding of and responsiveness to the Scope of Services described in Section III.
2. **Leadership Capacity** (Maximum of **20** points):

Response must reflect the applicant has the leadership capacity to effectively manage the proposed activity. The applicant must also demonstrate the capacity to serve as a subject matter expert on the given content area. Qualifications of key personnel must meet the applicant qualifications and capacity described in Section IV. Application includes a description of the key persons who will lead the initiative, including names, agency titles and the activities for which each person will be responsible. Collaborative partners or subcontractors, if used, should be qualified and have the capacity to provide the services specified. The narrative must include the name of any proposed subcontractors, the organization affiliation, any links to sites which might verify the subcontractor's expertise or capacity to provide the selected services and the activities for which the sub-contractor will be responsible. If a subcontractor will be identified during the planning process, the applicant must provide a detailed plan of the process to obtain one and the qualifications sought.

3. **Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion and Equity:** (Maximum of **10** points):  
Recognizing child outcomes vary disproportionately across race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, physical and developmental ability, and geography, the proposal must clearly demonstrate the applicant's ability to design and implement culturally responsive programming. To ensure the program that is developed is representative of and responsive to diverse identities of North Carolina families, the services provided by this contract, as well evidence of past work, shall include a focus of employing a diversity, equity and inclusion framework in project development and execution.
4. **Initiative Design, Timeline & Strategies** (Maximum of **30** points):  
Response must reflect an innovative design and methodology that will result in increased supports for the early care and education workforce and infrastructure as described in Section III. Timeline should be complete, logical, and realistic for the tasks proposed.
5. **Evaluation Plan:** (Maximum of **15** points):  
Plan must reflect appropriate strategies for regularly assessing the achievement of interim and final outputs and outcomes for the project. A theory of change and logic model are highly encouraged. The applicant must also show evidence of the ability to anticipate and adjust for challenges that may arise throughout the evaluation process. Lastly, the applicant must identify program evaluation partners and the plan for engaging them during the planning phase. The partners can be anyone who will support program evaluation planning and implementation. They may be individuals or organizations with research and evaluation expertise, evaluation design, analysis and/or reporting; stakeholders with a vested interest in the proposed activity, such as advocacy organizations or families.
6. **Line Item Budget\*, Detailed Budget Narrative and FTE Sheet\*:** (Maximum of **15** points):  
Budget must reflect efficient and effective use of financial resources. The proposal must not exceed the total budget allotted and must follow all stipulations included in the budget worksheet and narrative instructions. The plan must provide a clear and reasonable justification for all proposed expenditures. If funding will be used for conference

presentations, include the proposed conferences and the amount of funding which will be needed for those conferences.

Points can be added or reduced in any section for overall proper grammar usage and organization of the proposal.

**Maximum Points: 100**

Any attachments must further demonstrate the applicant's capacity to fulfill the requirements for this project as described. Attachments will not count against the applicant's page limitations. The selection committee will submit recommendations to DCDEE based on the selection process described. The Division of Child Development and Early Education will make a final selection and notify all applicants of that selection in writing and/or electronically no later than **5:00 pm on May 13, 2022**.

**IX. APPLICATION PROCUREMENT PROCESS**

1. Written questions concerning the RFA specifications will be received until the date specified on the cover sheet. A summary of all questions and answers will be posted to DCDEE's website (<https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Whats-New>) by **February 25, 2022**.
2. **An electronic submission** of the application must be received from each agency or organization. The submission must include an application face sheet with an electronic or scanned signature by an official authorized to bind the agency or organization in a legal contract.
3. All applications must be received by DCDEE via email no later than the date and time specified on the cover sheet of the RFA. **Paper copies or faxed applications will not be accepted.**
4. The date and time of application receipt will be documented by the date and time shown on the email submission received via [DCDEE.Contracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DCDEE.Contracts.Unit.RFA@dhhs.nc.gov). Budgets and budget narratives are to be included as part of the application submitted.
5. The RFA evaluation team may request additional information from any or all applicants for clarification or to support the materials presented in any part of the application. However, agencies and organizations are cautioned that the evaluation team is not required to request clarification; therefore, all applications should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the agency or organization.
6. Applications will be evaluated according to completeness, content, and applicant's documented experience with similar projects, apparent ability of the agencies or organization's staff and cost. The award of a grant to one agency and organization does not mean that the other applications lacked merit but that, all facts considered, the

selected application was deemed to provide the best service to the State.

7. Agencies and organizations are cautioned that this is a request for applications, and the funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any and all applications when such rejections are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency.
8. **Application Process Summary Dates**
  - 02/14/2022: Request for Applications issued
  - 02/15/2022: Bidder's Conference
  - 02/23/2022: Interested applications submit optional Notice of Intent no later than 5 pm
  - 02/23/2022: All questions due via email no later than 5 pm
  - 02/25/2022: Answers to Questions posted to the DCDEE website no later than 5 pm
  - 03/25/2022: Applications must be received via email no later than 5 pm
  - 05/13/2022: Successful applicant will be notified
  - 08/01/2022: Estimated contract start date.

## **X. GENERAL INFORMATION ON SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS**

1. **Award or Rejection**

All complete and timely submitted applications will be evaluated and awards will be made to that agencies or organizations whose combination of budget and service capabilities are deemed to be in the best interest of the funding agency. The funding agency reserves the unqualified right to reject any or all offers if determined to be in its best interest. The successful applicant will be notified by **May 13, 2022**.
2. **Cost of Application Preparation**

Any cost incurred by an agency or organization in preparing or submitting an application is the agency or organization's sole responsibility; the funding agency will not reimburse any agency or organization for any pre-award costs incurred.
3. **Elaborate Applications**

Elaborate applications in the form of brochures or other presentations beyond what is necessary to present a complete and effective application are not desired.
4. **Oral Explanations**

The funding agency will not be bound by oral explanations or instructions given at any time during the competitive process or after awarding the grant.
5. **Reference to Other Data**

Only information that is received in response to this RFA will be evaluated; reference to information previously submitted will not be considered.

**6. Titles**

Titles and headings in this RFA are for convenience only and shall have no binding force or effect.

**7. Form of Application**

Each application must be submitted utilizing the forms provided by DCDEE, and upon award, these forms will be incorporated into the funding agency's Performance Agreement (contract).

**8. Exceptions**

All applications are subject to the terms and conditions outlined herein. All responses will be controlled by such terms and conditions. The attachment of other terms and conditions by any agency or organization may be grounds for rejection of that agency or organization's application.

**9. Advertising**

In submitting its application, agencies and organizations agree not to use the results of the selection process as part of any news release or commercial advertising without prior written approval of DCDEE.

**10. Right to Submitted Material**

All responses, inquiries, or correspondence relating to or in reference to the RFA, and all other reports, charts, displays, schedules, exhibits, and other documentation submitted by the agency or organization will become the property of the funding agency when received.

**11. Competitive Offer**

Pursuant to the provision of N.C.G.S. 143-54, and under penalty of perjury, the signer of any application submitted in response to this RFA thereby certifies that this application has not been arrived at collusively or otherwise in violation of either Federal or North Carolina antitrust laws.

**12. Agency and Organization's Representative**

Each agency or organization shall submit with its application the name, address, and telephone number of the person(s) with authority to bind the agency or organization and answer questions regarding the application.

**13. Subcontracting**

Agencies and organizations may propose to subcontract portions of work provided that their applications clearly indicate the scope of the work to be subcontracted, and to whom.

**14. Proprietary Information**

Trade secrets or similar proprietary data which the agency or organization does not wish disclosed to other than personnel involved in the evaluation will be kept confidential to

the extent permitted by NCAC TO1: 05B.1501 and G.S. 132-1.3 if identified as follows: Each page shall be identified in boldface at the top and bottom as "CONFIDENTIAL." Any section of the application that is to remain confidential shall also be so marked in boldface on the title page of that section.

**15. Participation Encouraged**

Pursuant to Article 3 and 3C, Chapter 143 of the North Carolina General Statutes and Executive Order No. 77, the funding agency invites and encourages participation in this RFA by businesses owned by minorities, women and the disabled including utilization as subcontractor(s) to perform functions under this Request for Applications.

**16. Gifts Ban**

N.C.G.S. 133-32 and Executive Order 24 prohibit the offer to or acceptance by any State Employee of any gift from anyone with a contract with the State, or from any person seeking to do business with the State. By execution of any response to this request, agencies and organizations attest, for the entire organization and its employees or agents, that no such gift has been offered, accepted, or promised by any employees of the organization.

**17. Contract/Funds Disbursement**

DCDEE will issue a contract to the recipients of the grant that will include their application. Expenditures may begin upon receipt of a fully executed contract and not before that point. To receive compensation, following contract submission and agreement, the selected applicants must submit a monthly reimbursement request to the Division for all expenses incurred.

**18. Audit**

Please be advised that successful applicants may be required to have an audit in accordance with N.C.G.S. 143C-6-22 and N.C.G.S. 143C-6-23 as applicable to the agency's status.

There are 3 reporting levels which are determined by the total direct grant receipts from all State agencies in the entity's fiscal year:

Level 1: Less than \$25,000

Level 2: At least \$25,000 but less than \$500,000

Level 3: \$500,000 or more. Level 3 grantees are required to submit a "Yellow Book" audit done by a CPA.

Only Level 3 grantees may include audit expenses on the budget. Audit expenses should be prorated based on the ratio of the grant to the total pass-through funds received by the entity.

**19. Additional Documentation to Include with Application**

All applicants are required to include documentation of their tax identification number. Those applicants which are private nonprofit agencies are to include a copy of an IRS determination letter regarding the agency's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. (This letter normally includes the agency's tax identification number, so it would also satisfy that documentation requirement.)

**20. Federal Certifications**

Agencies or organizations receiving federal funds are required to execute Federal certifications regarding non-discrimination, Drug-Free Workplace, Environmental Tobacco Smoke, Debarment, Lobbying, and Lobbying Activities.

**21. System for Award Management Database (SAM)**

All grantees receiving federal funds must be actively registered in the federal government's System for Award Management (SAM) database or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the award (see [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)). To maintain an active SAM record, the record must be updated no less than annually.

**22. Additional Documentation Prior to Contract Execution**

Contracts will require additional documentation prior to contract execution. After the award announcement, agencies will be contacted about providing the following documentation:

- a. A completed and signed letter from the agency's Board President/Chairperson identifying individuals authorized to sign contracts.
- b. A completed and signed letter from the agency's Board President/Chairperson identifying individuals authorized to sign expenditure reports.
- c. Documentation of the agency's DUNS number. Documentation consists of a copy of communication (such as a letter or email correspondence) from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) which indicates the agency or organization's legal name, address, and DUNS number. In lieu of a document from D&B, a copy of the agency or organization's SAM record is acceptable.
- d. If your agency does not have a DUNS number, please use the D&B online registration (<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>) to receive one free of charge. (DUNS is the acronym for the Data Universal Numbering System developed and regulated by D&B.)
- e. Contracts with private non-profit agencies require additional documentation prior to contract execution. After the award announcement, private non-profit agencies will be contacted about providing the following documentation:
  - i. A completed, signed, and notarized statement which includes the agency's Conflict of Interest Policy.
  - ii. A completed, signed, and notarized page certifying that the agency has no overdue tax debts.

- f. All grantees receiving funds through the State of North Carolina are required to execute Contractor Certifications Required by North Carolina Law. Contractor Certifications should **NOT** be generated, signed or returned with application.

**Note:** At the start of each calendar year, all agencies with current DCDEE contracts are required to update their contract documentation. These agencies will be contacted a few weeks prior to the due date and will be provided the necessary forms and instructions.

### **23. Registration with Secretary of State**

Private non-profit applicants must also be registered with the North Carolina Secretary of State to do business in North Carolina or be willing to complete the registration process in conjunction with the execution of the contract documents. (See [www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations](http://www.secretary.state.nc.us/corporations).)

### **24. Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Data Reporting Requirement**

The Contractor shall complete and submit to the Division, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Data Reporting Requirement form within 10 State Business Days when awarded \$25,000 or more in federal funds.

### **25. Salary Limitation**

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, (Division H, Title II, Sec. 202), limits the salary amount that may be awarded and charged to ACF grants and cooperative agreements. Award funds issued under this announcement may not be used to pay the salary of an individual at a rate in excess of Executive Level II. The Executive Level II salary of the "Rates of Pay for the Executive Schedule" is \$189,600. This amount reflects an individual's base salary exclusive of fringe benefits and any income that an individual may be permitted to earn outside of the duties of the applicant organization. This salary limitation also applies to subawards and subcontracts under an ACF grant or cooperative agreement.

The Appropriations Act of 2017 (N.C. Session Law 2017-57), which was adopted by reference in 2019 budget legislation, SECTION 6.4 limits the State funds used for the annual salary of any individual employee of a nonprofit organization to \$120,000.

Per the statute *"No more than one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000) in State funds, including any interest earnings accruing from those funds, may be used for the annual salary of any individual employee of a nonprofit organization."*

- *The term "State funds" is defined by law in N.C.G.S. 143C-1-1(d)(25): Any moneys including federal funds deposited in the State treasury except moneys deposited in a trust fund or agency fund as described in G.S. 143C-1-3.*
- *HHSAR 331.101.70(b) Part 353: The salary rate limitation does not restrict the salary that an organization may pay an individual working under a Department of Health and Human Services contract or order; it merely limits the portion of that salary that may be paid with contract funds.*

- *The salary cap is for a 12-month period. That means that the cap amount is reduced for the 9-month academic period or 3 months contract period.*
- *The cap is for a 1.0 FTE. That means the cap is proportionally reduced for a .75 or .50 FTE.”*

## **XI. APPLICATION CHECKLIST**

The following items must be included in the application. Please assemble the application in the following order in the format identified in Section VII on page 12:

- ☐ Application Checklist – Item 1
- ☐ Application Face Sheet – Item 2
- ☐ Proposal Summary/Design/Evaluation Plan – Item 3
- ☐ List of Subcontractors – Item 4
- ☐ Line-Item Budget & FTE Worksheet – Item 5
- ☐ Indirect Cost Rate Approval Letter (if applicable)
- ☐ Letters of Commitment or Statements of Support – Item 6
- ☐ IRS Tax Status Documentation – Item 7
  - a. IRS letter documenting your organization’s tax identification number
  - OR
  - b. IRS determination letter regarding your organization’s 501(c)(3) tax exempt status for private nonprofits